

**Christmas IED Attack as told by Lt. David MacPhail,
Andrews Platoon Leader,
(Now Captain MacPhail)**

**This story is included in a book that every Platoon
Leader must read before they can lead a Platoon.**

It is called "A Platoon Leader's Tour"

The route-clearance platoon crept along at five miles per hour in its "domination formation." Operating late at night after curfew, the hulking vehicles-RG-31 MRAPs, Buffalos, Huskies, and un-armored Humvees moved in parallel columns along both sides of the highway. Lieutenant Dave MacPhail's Humvee moved behind an RG-31 and in front of a Buffalo.

Whomp - WHHHHHOOOOOOOMMMM!

There was a bright flash of light, and then MacPhail saw the RG-31 lurch sideways and roll to a stop amid a cloud of smoke. This was the first time his platoon had been hit by an IED, but the Soldiers had rehearsed endlessly for this moment. MacPhail's Humvee moved forward of the stricken vehicle as the platoon established 360-degree security. After a quick check for secondary IED's, the platoon's aid-and-litter team dismounted and moved to treat the wounded.

MacPhail stayed on the radio to send the SITREP and request a QRF and MEDEVAC. "Apache base, this is Apache One-Six, over."

No response.

"Ironclaw base, this is Apache One-Six, over," he called. His calls went unanswered. His platoon was too far away from both his company and battalion TOCs.

"We have three KIA and one litter urgent," came the initial report from his assistant patrol leader, a squad leader who was leading the casualty ops. MacPhail switched frequencies and finally established communications with an American unit. That unit's TOC began to relay all of MacPhail's reports to his higher HQ.

Looking in his side-view mirror at the activities going on behind his truck, MacPhail watched as his medic treated the wounded Soldier. One of the dead Soldiers whose legs had been shorn off lay on the road behind the MRAP.

Then MacPhail observed the "dead" Soldier begin to move, twisting his trunk from side to side and raising his arms. MacPhail jumped out of his truck. "He's alive!" he yelled, pointing at the casualty. "Help him!" Horrified, Soldiers from the aid-and-litter team rushed to their comrade and placed tourniquets on him, but he soon died.

The assistant patrol leader ran to MacPhail's truck. "We got CASEVAC SGT B right now - no time to wait for a MEDEVAC" he said breathlessly. "I'll put him in my truck and take the Buffalo for security."

After the CASEVAC convoy departed MacPhail sat in his vehicle waiting for a QRF and a recovery team to arrive. The smoldering fire in the RG-31 began to grow larger. The realization of what had occurred began to sink in. He couldn't

bear the thought of his Soldiers being burned in the flames - even if they were dead.

He tugged on his gunner's leg. "Let's go get them out of there!" he said to the strongest Soldier in his truck. The Humvee's driver moved up into the turret to null security. MacPhail led his gunner to the burning vehicle. The door on the back end of the MRAP was open with dark smoke pouring out. MacPhail nulled himself up to the doorway and entered the troop compartment. His boots slipped on the slick, blood-soaked surface. He immediately saw a Soldier wedged against the vehicle's hull, but the casualty was unrecognizable. Dave and his gunner grabbed onto the Soldier's IBA and began to pull, but the body was stuck. "I'll grab his legs and push," MacPhail told his gunner.

When Dave moved to take hold of the Soldier's legs, he discovered that they weren't there. There. The mush of flesh he encountered offered no leverage. There was nothing they could do to dislodge the body.

Flames began licking at the rescuers. "We got to get out of here, sir," his gunner said. "Rounds are going to start cooking off." Dave was determined to protect at least one of his Soldier's remains. He moved forward in the compartment and grabbed hold of the driver. (Andrew) first under his arms to no avail, and then by his IBA loop. He pulled with all his strength, but again the Soldier didn't budge.

"Sir! Rounds are cooking off!" he heard his gunner yell through the smoke and flames.

Dave let go of his fallen Soldier and crawled down the length of the burning vehicle, tumbling out its back door onto the bloody highway.

For the next two hours, Dave and his Soldiers watched the RG-31 burn and listened to the ammunition inside it explode, knowing that two of their brothers were inside.